

Access for Success

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Commissioner of Higher Education

After months of collaborative work, the *Master Plan for Public Postsecondary Education* is complete and the task of implementing this shared vision has begun. The new Master Plan is essentially a blue print for the future of Louisiana's public postsecondary education enterprise. It seeks to create an integrated system of institutions that uses resources effectively by focusing on the important needs of the people of our state.

The new plan is aimed at maximizing student access to this enterprise and increasing student success. One important feature of this plan is a new admissions framework which will help students succeed in college by expecting appropriate academic preparation and providing for a complementary institution-student match.

We are actively communicating with parents and students to inform them of new admissions criteria. Campuses are providing students more information about the new standards and making them aware of all the educational options available at Louisiana's technical colleges, community colleges and four-year universities. I invite you to visit the "Parent" link on this website to learn more.

With the establishment of this new admissions framework come important responsibilities both for future students and for the institutions directly affected by changes in traditional enrollment patterns. To help students better prepare for success, the Board of Regents is funding the statewide use of an "Educational Planning and Assessment System," or EPAS, which is designed and administered by the ACT college testing service. This year (2001-2002), EPAS assessed more than 100,000 eighth and tenth grade students in English, math, reading and science reasoning. The program addresses students' academic and workforce preparation and assists students and parents in identifying career and educational options, establishing goals related to those options, and outlining the preparation needed to reach those goals.

In many ways, the successful implementation of the Master Plan will require a cultural change in postsecondary education. We are moving from a mindset that "bigger is better" to one that embraces improved quality through rigorous academic preparation, increased retention, and higher graduation rates as true measurements of success. To assist our institutions with the important transitional work that must take place, we are supporting the system boards in further developing enrollment management strategies for each campus.

The Master Plan also recognizes the tremendous ability of our institutions to aid in the state's economic and social development. This relationship between postsecondary education and the state's economic and social vitality is a recurring theme underlying all of our initiatives and activities. There is a growing awareness in Louisiana that educational, economic, and social development are inextricably linked.

To ensure progress, we must sustain the current policy environment that establishes these initiatives as the state's top budget priorities and continue to strengthen partnerships among elementary and secondary education, higher education, the Louisiana Department of Economic Development, the Louisiana Department of Labor, local government and business interests and

many other stake holders.

To maintain public support, we must also continue to demonstrate the kind of success that we are now experiencing. Enrollment in colleges and universities is up. ACT scores are up. Graduation rates are up, and remedial education is down. We are doing many good things, but we must do more.

As our state explores various avenues for economic and social improvement, we in postsecondary education understand that we have a critical role to play. Citizens around the state should know that we are willing and active partners in this endeavor.

Our challenge is to use the tremendous energy, intellectual capacity, and creativity that exists on our college and university campuses in order to succeed in this important endeavor for the benefit of our state, our communities, and our children. It is a challenge we embrace and stand ready to meet.